

# PREHISTORIC BRISTOL

The Prehistory of the Lower Bristol Avon

L. V. GRINSELL

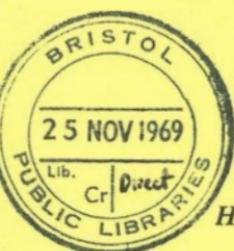
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## BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION LOCAL HISTORY PAMPHLETS



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*Prehistoric Bristol* is the twenty-third pamphlet published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association. Its author, Mr. L. V. Grinsell, is Curator of Archaeology in the City Museum, Bristol, and his publications include *Ancient Burial Mounds of England* (Methuen, 1936; 2nd edition, 1953), *The Archaeology of Wessex* (Methuen, 1958) and *The Preparation of Archaeological Reports* (jointly with P. A. Rahtz and Alan Warhurst), as well as numerous papers in the Proceedings and Transactions of various national and local archaeological societies. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Hon. Treasurer of the Prehistoric Society since 1947, and Chairman of the Bristol Archaeological Research Group.

Other pamphlets in course of preparation include Mr. M. Q. Smith's study of the medieval churches of Bristol, Mr. Grahame Farr's examination of Bristol shipbuilding in the nineteenth century, and a pamphlet on John Wesley and Bristol by Dr. John Kent.

Miss K. M. D. Barker's two pamphlets on the history of *The Theatre Royal, Bristol*, have enjoyed great popularity. The second pamphlet is out of print, but, thanks to a generous response to an appeal, it has been possible to reprint the first of the pamphlets which now goes into its third edition.

A full list of publications will be found on the inside back cover. The pamphlets can be obtained from most Bristol booksellers or direct from Mr. Peter Harris, 74 Bell Barn Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol 9, BS9 2DG. They are also on sale at the Porters' Lodge in the Wills Memorial Building and in the Senate House. The Branch hopes that readers will help its work by placing standing orders for future productions.

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## The Prehistory of the Lower Bristol Avon

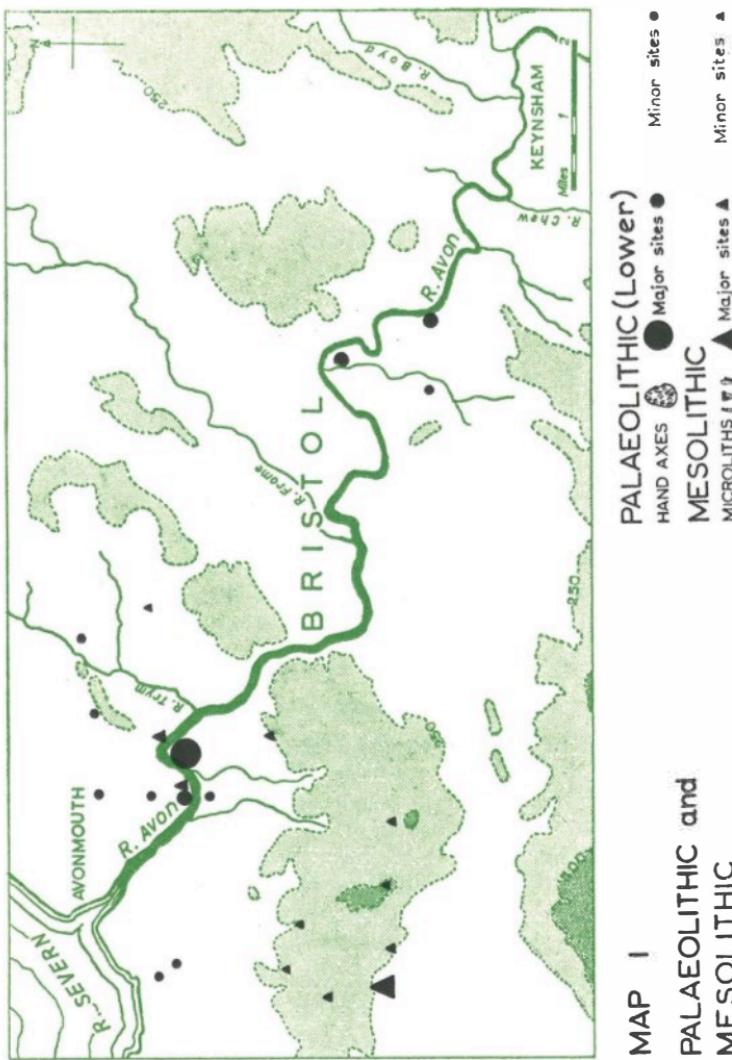
by L. V. GRINSELL

For the purpose of this publication, the Bristol area is considered as the area between Keynsham and the outflow of the Bristol Avon at Avonmouth, including a strip varying between one and four miles wide on each side of the river, as shown on Maps I—IV. This survey is intended to deal as completely as possible with the area covered by these Maps, and to treat in less detail material outside that area, which will be invoked only when necessary to stress a point that is not covered by sites or finds strictly within the area.

*The Lower Palaeolithic Period (roughly from 200,000 to 100,000 years ago). Map I.*

This period is represented in the valley of the Bristol Avon by the Acheulian industries, named from the type station of St. Acheul in the Somme valley, which has yielded many ovate and pear-shaped hand-axes characteristic of the period. These industries flourished during the very long Second Interglacial phase, a warm period which supported animals such as the ancient straight-tusked elephant, the hunting of which comprised the basic economy of the time. Trees utilized by man included yew from which he is known to have made spears.

Early in the nineteenth century, elephants' teeth were reported from the Shirehampton gravels but it is not known whether they



Map I. Bristol area in the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods

were of *Elephas antiquus* (warm) or *elephas primigenius* (cold: mammoth).<sup>1</sup> Remains of *Elephas antiquus* were found in the rock fissure on Durdham Down early last century, but many more have come from the gravels between Bath and Kelston.

Hundreds of implements of flint and chert, predominantly Acheulian hand-axes and tools of related forms, have been found in the gravels of the Lower Bristol Avon, in the region of the 80-100 foot terrace of its forerunner. This means that the river has cut that depth into its channel by erosion since those who made the implements were living on its banks. By far the most prolific site is at Chapel Pill Farm<sup>1</sup> where more than a hundred implements have been found by the late R. G. Hughes, T. R. Fry and others during the last forty years. Much smaller numbers have come from several sites in the vicinity of Shirehampton and Brislington. They are mostly in the City Museum and the Museum of the University Spelaeological Society, but a few are in private hands. They are mostly somewhat unattractive in appearance because of the poor quality of the local raw material.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Middle and Upper Palaeolithic Periods* (roughly from 100,000 years ago to 10,000 B.C.).

The Middle Palaeolithic is so far unrepresented in the area, the nearest site where it occurs being the Hyaena Den at Wookey.<sup>3</sup>

The Upper Palaeolithic was a cold period dating from the last (or Würm) glacial phase, during which the economy was hunting and food-gathering. The animals included mammoth, reindeer, woolly rhinoceros, and wild horse. Bones of all these and other animals of the period were found in the Durdham Down Fissure early last century. This is believed to have been a natural pitfall and no artifacts of the period were found.<sup>4</sup> Most of the evidence of human settlement in this period comes from caves including

1. J. Rutter. *Delineations of North-West Somerset* (1829), 315.

2. A. D. Lacaille. "Palaeoliths from the lower reaches of the Bristol Avon", in *Antiq. J.* 34 (1954), 1-27; T. R. Fry, "Further Notes on the Gravel Terraces of the Bristol Avon, and their Palaeoliths", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 7, 3 (1956) 121-9; D. A. Roe, *A Gazetteer of the British Lower and Middle Palaeolithic Sites* (C. B. A. Research Report No. 8, 1968), 71-2, 256.

3. A few flint implements found near St. Anne's Park, Brislington, about 1926, and then published as Mousterian (Middle Palaeolithic), are now known to be Middle Acheulian. *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 7, 3 (1956), 129.

4. E. Wilson, "The Bone Cavern or Fissure on Durdham Down", in *Proc. Bristol Natur. Soc. N.S.5* (1885), 31-45.

those of Cheddar and Wookey. There may have been a small open site between Mendip and the Bristol Avon in the Chew Valley, where a flint knife of Creswellian type and some flint blades were found in 1953.<sup>1</sup>

*The Mesolithic Period* (roughly between 10,000 and 3,500 B.C.)  
Map I.

The retreat of the final glaciation and melting of the ice-cap led to a rise in sea-level, and around 5,500 B.C. to the formation of the English Channel and much of the Severn estuary. Animals useful to man now included early types of dog, and plants included birch, the bark of which was used for extracting resin to use as an adhesive for fixing flint implements into their hafts of bone, antler, or wood. The economy of the period comprised hunting, food-gathering and fishing. Continuance of the marine transgression (encroachment of the sea on the land) however resulted in many of the coastal sites of this period becoming subsequently submerged, rendering our present knowledge of the coastal and riverside aspect of the settlement pattern quite incomplete. Our knowledge of the upland aspect of the distribution pattern has been conditioned largely by the extent to which arable fields have been searched by collectors of flint implements.

Flint and stone industries of the period comprise largely an easily distinguishable *light industry* characterized by miniature worked flints known as microliths of many different types, but mostly inserted into hafts of bone, antler, or wood, for use in hunting and fishing; and a *heavy industry* of larger implements of flint and other stone which includes scrapers and rubbing stones or burnishers. A submerged site at Crabtree Slip, between Sea Mills and Shirehampton, included a light and possibly a heavy component, but some of the latter may in fact be of later periods. Microliths have also been found at Shirehampton and in many localities between the left bank of the Bristol Avon and the Failand Ridge, including Abbots Leigh, Failand, and Tyntesfield; and traces of a mesolithic hut were found at Birdcombe near Wraxall.<sup>2</sup> The material includes microlithic flakes and cores, showing that much of it was produced locally. During the excava-

1. A. M. ApSimon, "A Creswellian Implement from the Chew Valley, North Somerset", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 8, 1 (1957), 46-8 and fig. 10/8.

2. C. M. Sykes and E. S. Whittle, The Birdcombe Mesolithic Site, Wraxall, in *Proc. Somerset Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Soc.* 104 (1960) 106-22.

tions at the medieval college at Westbury-on-Trym in 1968, microliths and microlithic flakes were found.

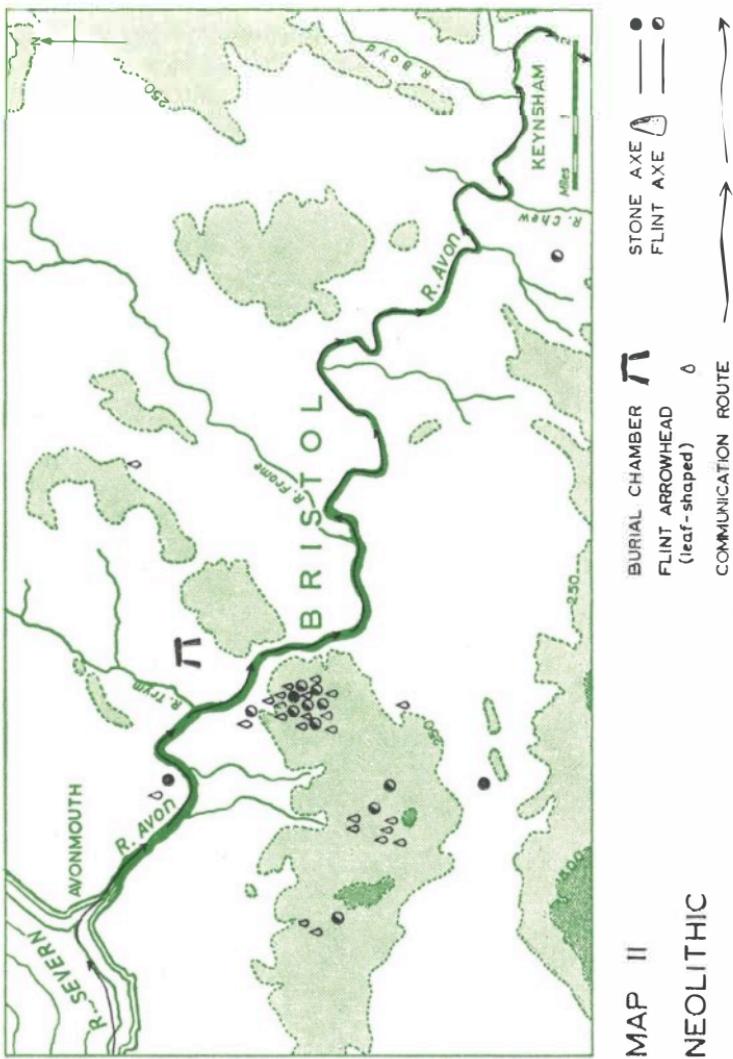
*The Neolithic Period (roughly 3,500 B.C. to 1,700 B.C.) Map II.*

The term "Neolithic Revolution" has been associated with this period, because it witnessed several fundamental technological advances, including the introduction and development of agriculture and pasture, the grinding and polishing of a proportion of axe-heads and other implements of flint and stone, and the invention of the art of pottery-making. The introduction of cereal cultivation and the domestication of animals were inevitably accompanied by a reduction in the area of woodland, effected partly by burning, partly by the activities of sheep and cattle, and partly by tree-felling with ground and polished axe-heads of stone and flint, which have been shown by experiment to be more effective than axe-heads that have been chipped only. Axe-heads of greenstone, probably derived from Cornish stone-axe factory sites, the products from which were traded up the Bristol Channel and the Bristol Avon, have been found at Abbots Leigh and Long Ashton. Axe-heads of flint, sometimes chipped only but more often ground and/or polished, have come from Abbots Leigh, Leigh Woods Park, Leigh Court, Failand, and Bishopsworth. These must have been made of flint imported from the Wessex Chalk along either the Mendip ridgeway or the Bristol Avon. The flint was imported as raw material, there being abundant evidence of local flint-working in the form of hammerstones, fabricators, cores, and waste flakes, especially between the Avon and the Failand Ridge.

Hunting and warfare are attested by the occurrence of numerous leaf-shaped flint arrowheads, chiefly between the Bristol Avon and the Failand Ridge, notably in the vicinity of Leigh Woods, Abbots Leigh, and Failand; but isolated examples have been noted from Horfield and Shirehampton. Arrow-shafts and bows, usually of yew, have occasionally been preserved in the peat of the Somerset Levels. The bows were about six feet long and made with great skill.<sup>1</sup> Hollow-scrapers, or notched flakes, possibly for smoothing arrow-shafts, have been found at Abbots Leigh and elsewhere.

The absence of any evidence of textiles or weaving in Britain during the period implies that the clothes worn were normally skins. This is borne out by the numerous flint scrapers (for

1. A full-size reproduction of a Neolithic bow of yew, the original of which was found at Meare, is in the City Museum, Bristol.



Map II. Bristol area in the Neolithic period

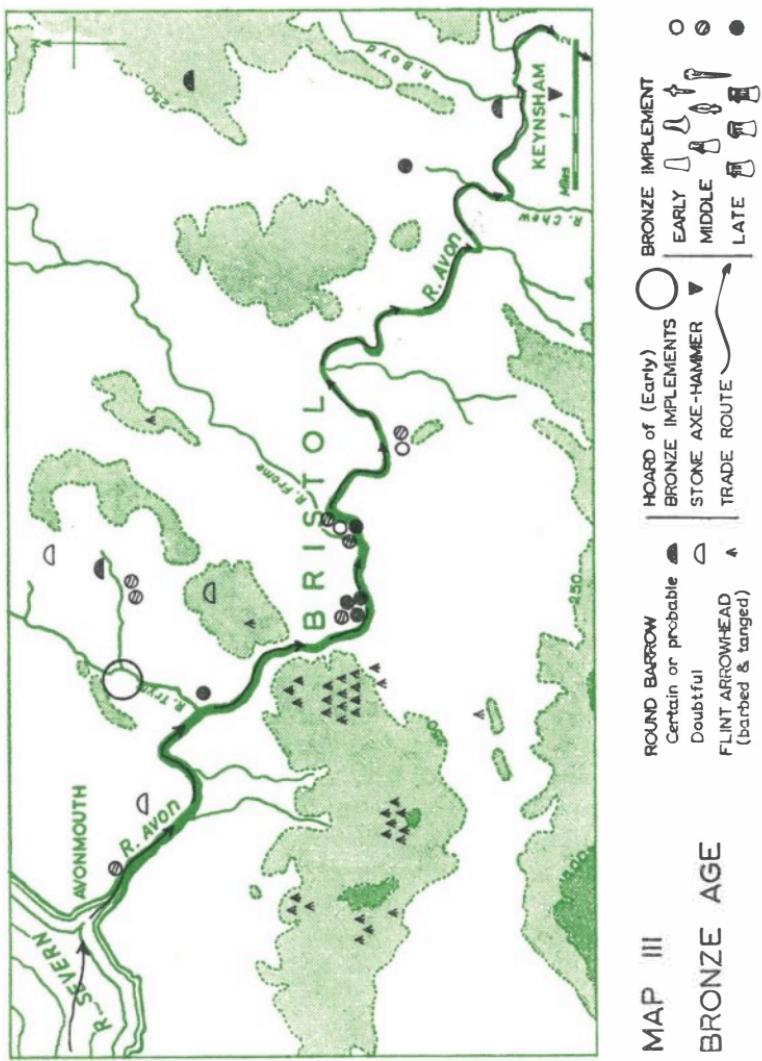
dressing skins) and flint borers or piercers (for piercing them) found in the same localities which yield axe-heads and arrowheads. Flint scrapers have been found near the Observatory on Clifton Down, at Sneyd Park, Kings Weston, Sea Mills (near the Roman site), Fishponds, and Shirehampton, and in great numbers towards the Failand Ridge, where a few borers have also been found. Scrapers and borers continue into the Bronze Age but are usually undatable unless found in an archaeological context.

The Neolithic period is notable in the funerary record for the practice of communal burial beneath long mounds or cairns, which on and around the Cotswolds assume imposing proportions and usually incorporate internal stone chambering, and are usually built of the local oolitic limestone carefully laid in horizontal courses. Those on the Cotswolds, in North Somerset, and in the Welsh marches are usually described as the Severn-Cotswold (or Cotswold-Severn) Group. The megalithic remains now in the garden of the house called "Cromlech", 59 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, are believed to be the last remnant of such a chambered long barrow.<sup>1</sup> The site was visited and possibly discovered by Rev. John Skinner of Camerton on 28 November, 1811, when it was in the corner of a field. It appears to be a burial-chamber with an unusually large cover-slab, but there are now no traces of any mound or cairn. The site was explored with no satisfactory result by Francis Were in 1913.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Bronze Age (about 1800 to 600/550 B.C.). Map III.*

The climate in Southern England until towards the end of this period was warm and dry. The economy was as before, with the addition of the introduction and development of metalworking, and the period shows an increase in foreign contacts which probably reached its maximum in the Early Bronze Age. The presence of impressions of textiles on some bronze implements, and other evidence, shows that skin clothing was now being partly replaced by woven garments.

1. The attribution of this monument to the Druids dates from Samuel Seyer (1821), and was perpetuated by the Ordnance Survey who showed it as "Druidical Stones" on their 1 inch Map of 1878-84. Since then, it has given the names to Druid Hill, Druid Road, Druid Stoke Avenue, and Druid Stoke, all in its vicinity.
2. British Museum Ad. Ms. 33643, folio 79; the fullest account is in O. G. S. Crawford. *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds* (1925), 223-6.



Map III. Bristol area in the Bronze Age

The *Copper Age and Beaker Cultures* (about 1800 to 1600 B.C.) have left evidence in the valley of the Lower Bristol Avon in the form of flat metal axe-heads one or two of which are probably of copper, and beaker-burials such as those from Corston near Bath; but the only material possibly of this period from the immediate environs of Bristol comprises barbed-and tanged flint arrowheads which begin in this period but continue into the Early and perhaps Middle Bronze Age and possibly even later. They have been found in quantity between the Bristol Avon and the Failand Ridge, notably at Abbots Leigh, Leigh Court, Portbury Lane, Ashton Court, Yanley, Failand, Tyntesfield, and Wraxall. Isolated specimens have been found on Clifton Down (near the Observatory), and at Sea Mills and Shirehampton. An example from Pur Down is in the Somerset County Museum at Taunton.<sup>1</sup>

During this period a factory-site for making perforated stone axe-hammers and battle-axes of a local stone known as picrite was established on the southern slope of Corndon Hill, on the Montgomeryshire-Shropshire border, and some of its products were traded down the Severn to the Lower Severn region, where they have been found at Cromhall in South Gloucestershire, and at Keynsham. This factory continued into the Early Bronze Age.<sup>2</sup>

It is believed to have been during the Copper Age that there occurred the momentous event of transporting from Carn Meini, on the Prescelly Hills above Haverfordwest, the four different varieties of *blue-stone* destined for incorporating into the second building-phase of Stonehenge. A block of micaceous sandstone from the Milford Haven area was transported probably about the same time to serve as the Stonehenge Altar Stone. A careful study of all available evidence, including the occurrence of a stone axe of preselite (*blue-stone*) just west of Caerwent, and a large block of *blue-stone* in Boles Barrow long barrow near Heytesbury, has led Prof. R. J. C. Atkinson and most other experts to conclude that the route from the Prescelly Hills to Stonehenge was up the Bristol Channel and the Bristol Avon and then south from where is now Bath up the Frome and down the river Wylde and so to Stonehenge. What concerns us here is that the route probably passed by the spot later to be occupied by Bristol.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Proc. Somerset Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Soc.* 96 (1952), 19.
2. F. W. Shotton, L. F. Chitty, and W. A. Seaby. "A New Centre of Stone Axe Dispersal on the Welsh Border", in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 17 (1951), 159-67.
3. R. J. C. Atkinson. *Stonehenge* (1960).

The *Early Bronze Age* (roughly 1600 to 1400/1350 B.C.) is represented in the region by many of the barbed-and-tanged flint arrowheads just described, but also by some bronze implements. A flat bronze axe was recorded from Bristol Bridge (before 1903) and another may have been found at Totterdown in or before 1955. These may both be Irish imports. An important hoard, comprising three flanged bronze axes two of which are decorated, and a chisel or tracer with lateral stops (which may have been used in decorating the axes), was found by schoolboys on August Bank Holiday 1899 beneath an overhanging ledge of rock at Coombe Dingle, Westbury-on-Trym. These are considered by most experts to be of Irish manufacture; but recent metallurgical analysis has led some to doubt this. A nodule of haematite (iron ore), found a little later in the same place, may have been associated.<sup>1</sup>

In this period the funerary record comprises most of the round barrows scattered over the Mendip Hills, the Cotswolds, and the hills around Bath. In the immediate environs of Bristol two or three possible round barrows exist or may formerly have existed. One at Southmead, known as "Mill Tut", may have been used as a steading for a windmill but seems to have originated as a round barrow. It was opened in 1873 by members of the Clifton College Science Society, who found a human skull in the centre, and a further exploration in it was made by the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society in 1922 or 1923. From the material of the mound came two flint scrapers and portions of polished flint implements. The mound is now about 20 paces in diameter and 6 or 7 feet high, and contains a central core of mould or turves, and a circumferential circle of limestone rubble which may have been a ruined wall.<sup>2</sup>

Other possible round barrows remain to be considered. A lignite bead similar to those from Early Bronze Age barrows, found associated with flints in the soil overlying a quarry on Brentry Hill near Westbury-on-Trym in spring 1889, could well have come from a probably female interment in an otherwise unrecorded round barrow. It was bequeathed by Spencer George Perceval to the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology

1. A. E. Hudd. "Four Bronze Implements from Coombe Dingle", in *Proc. Clifton Antiq. Club.* 5 (1904), 118-21 and plate XX.
2. H. E. O'Neil and L. V. Grinsell. "Gloucestershire Barrows", in *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.* 79, 1 (1961), 1-149, esp. 100.

and Ethnology.<sup>1</sup> The group of firs known as "The Seven Sisters" on Durdham Down is on a circular mound which has been claimed to be a round barrow. It may be; or it may have been produced by the lateral roots of the trees, together with protection from denudation by their foliage, and the construction of a slight bank and ditch (tree-clump enclosure) when the trees were planted, to prevent animals from nibbling at the young trees. Such tree-clump enclosures were frequently made during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> If there was ever a round barrow on Barrow Hill between Shirehampton and Avonmouth, it has been destroyed without any record, and the ground is now built over.

*The Middle Bronze Age* (about 1400/1350 to 1000 B.C.) is marked by the continued development of metallurgy in bronze, shown by an increasing variety of bronze implements and weapons, and this is well illustrated by local finds mostly from the Avon or its banks. Flat and flanged axes were succeeded by unlooped palstaves, examples of which have been found at Bristol Bridge (before 1903) and Westbury-on-Trym (1885), where two were found, one being in the City Museum, while the other found its way to the Muzeum de Vorgeschichte in Berlin. A slightly later palstave, looped, doubtfully from Totterdown, has a trident pattern below the stopridge.

Early socketed spearheads include one with loops on the socket, from "Bristol Excavations" perhaps in the vicinity of Bristol Bridge, found 1913 or earlier. This type is common in Ireland; some consider it an Irish import, but others think the type may also have been made in the Lower Severn region. A socketed spearhead with loops at base of the blade, from Prince Street, was found in or before 1932; and another, believed to be a local find, was presented to the City Museum in 1967. A fine rapier was found in the Royal Edward Dock, Avonmouth, in 1903.

The close of the Middle Bronze Age was characterized especially in Somerset by what are known as "Ornament Horizon" implements because they often occur in hoards which include torcs, armlets and other objects of adornment. The fact that they have not yet been recorded from the immediate vicinity of Bristol is presumably due only to the hazards of loss and discovery,

1. L. C. G. Clarke, "Prehistoric and Romano-British objects from England in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge", in *Antiq. J.* 6 (1926) 175-80.
2. H. E. O'Neil and L. V. Grinsell. *op. cit.*, 100.

since a hoard has come from Monkswood near Bath, and individual objects found in North Somerset include part of a bronze torc from Sandford Hill, Winscombe, and a slender socketed axe with squared mouth and slightly expanded cutting-edge ("Taunton" type) from West Town, Lulsgate, the latter being the nearest find to Bristol so far on record.<sup>1</sup>

No barrows or interments of this period are yet known from the Bristol area.

*The Late Bronze Age* (about 1000 to 600/550 B.C.) is distinguished in Southern Britain by the addition of lead to the bronze alloy. The most characteristic implement of this period is the socketed axe, of which four are known from the Bristol region. One found at Warmley about 1957 has three fairly *closely-spaced* vertical ribs and approaches the "South Welsh" type where most of them were almost certainly made and this suggests some trade across the Bristol Channel. An example from Sea Mills has three *widely-spaced* vertical ribs and is close to the "Yorkshire" type. One from Hotwells has five pendulums (vertical ribs ending in pellets) and looks as though it might be French. A socketed axe from Prince Street has a mouth of octagonal section—an unusual type which occurs in Ireland and elsewhere; a mould for this type of axe has, however, been found in or near the Quantock Hills but the Bristol axe was not cast in it.

The pointed end of a sword-blade was found about 1874 during construction of the Cumberland Basin.

It is uncertain whether all of a group of small round barrows on Kings Weston Hill date from Iron Age A, or whether one of them may date from the Late Bronze Age (see below).

#### *The Iron Age* (about 600/550 B.C. to A.D. 43). Map IV.

The transition from Late Bronze to Early Iron Age was marked by a deterioration of the climate, which became cool and wet. The period is notable for its nucleated settlements often within defensive earthworks, and for the development of trade and early coinage.

To the latter part of the *Earlier Phase* (mainly Iron Age A), perhaps about 450/350 B.C. or later, belong the circular enclosure

1. M. A. Smith, "Some Somerset Hoards and their Place in the Bronze Age of Southern Britain", in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 25 (1959), 144-87. Finds since then are described in the *Guide Catalogue* (see below, Bibliographical Note).

and the small sub-rectangular univallate hill-fort on Kings Weston Hill, as shown by their pottery.<sup>1</sup> The cross-ridge dyke to the west is undated but may be an outwork of the same period. The slight univallate enclosure on the north-western part of Coombe Hill, on ground mostly occupied by Henbury Golf Course, is undated but its general character also suggests that it may belong to this phase.<sup>2</sup>

Four small round barrows, also on Kings Weston Hill, excavated by the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society in 1924, are probably of this general period. One seems to have contained the inhumation of a child but had been disturbed in the Roman and Saxon periods. Two others contained probably primary cremations, one with parts of a bi-partite urn which could be Late Bronze Age (see above) or earliest Iron Age, and the other with parts of bowls certainly Iron Age A and similar to some from All Cannings Cross in Wiltshire, together with the iron check-piece of a horse's bridle. Results of excavation of the fourth barrow were inconclusive.<sup>3</sup>

To the *Middle Phase* (mainly Iron Age B), but to the latter part of it, belongs the hill-fort on Blaise Castle Hill. This fine multivallate hill-fort, the earlier name of which may have been Henbury, has yielded many surface-finds, and was the subject of trial excavations in 1956-7, the material from which included pottery (some decorated in the style of the Somerset Lakeside village wares), daub with wattle-marks, portions of querns, weaving-combs and spindle-whorls, and two bronze brooches of La Tène I type, which are perhaps either survivals from a slightly earlier period or else possibly loot from the settlements on Kings Weston Hill. The latter are believed to have been attacked and overcome by the inhabitants of Blaise Castle hill-fort, armed with their slings, whose slingstones and sling-pellets of baked clay occur abundantly in primary levels at Blaise hill-fort but in later levels at the enclosure and the hill-fort on Kings Weston Hill.<sup>4</sup>

It remains to consider the three hill-forts covering the approach up the Bristol Avon; Clifton on the right bank, and Burwalls

1. P. A. Rahtz. "Kings Weston Down Camp, Bristol, 1956", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 8 (1959), 30-8.
2. J. W. Haldane. "Coombe Hill Enclosure, Bristol", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 11 (1968), 249-51.
3. E. K. Tratman. "First and Second Reports on Kings Weston Hill", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 2 (1926), 76-82, 238-43, summarized in *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.* 79, 1 (1961), 99.
4. P. A. Rahtz and J. C. Brown. "Blaise Castle Hill, Bristol, 1957", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 8 (1959), 147-71.

MAP IV

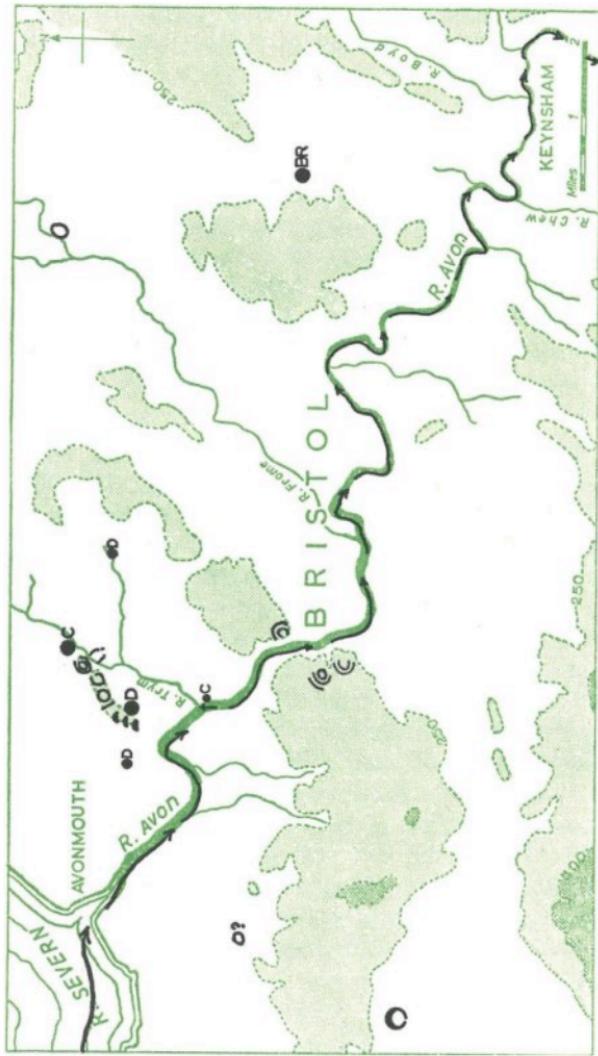
HILL-FORT or ENCLOSURE  
(showing number and  
position of ramparts)

MISCELLANEOUS  
Short sword  
Bronze collar

NT BRITISH COIN  
gold silver &  
Rh Remi's BR  
nni D D

or ENCLOSURE  
number and  
(of ramparts)  
BECOW

ANCIENT BRITISH COIN	gold silver bronze	MISCELLANEOUS		
		Short sword	Bronze collar	TRADE ROUTE
'British Remi'	BR			
Doburni	D	do		
Cunobelin	C			



#### Map IV. Bristol area in the Iron Age

and Stokeleigh on the left. No excavation under modern conditions has yet been made at Clifton hill-fort, but the strong multivallate defences on the north-east side suggest that it belongs to this phase. Of Burwalls, now partly occupied by the grounds of the University Hall of Residence named from it, little is known, excepting that A. C. Pass, who watched some of the ramparts being levelled, thought they had been vitrified (i.e. destroyed by fire) and this would imply that they had carried timber-lacing. Stokeleigh hill-fort, in Leigh Woods north of Nightingale Valley, is multivallate in the north-western sector, bivallate in the western sector, and univallate on the southern side above Nightingale Valley. Excavation in parts of the ramparts has uncovered dry stone walling. So far little dating evidence has emerged; but the character of the defences leaves little room for doubt that they are essentially Iron Age B. The "hilt of an old sword" and a quern were found on the site in the eighteenth century; and part of the upper stone of a quern of red sandstone, found by the late Dr. Stanley Smith in the Nightingale Valley, could well have come from this site, and it is similar to one from the Glastonbury Lakeside Village. These hill-forts are sited in the immediate vicinity of an ancient but undated ford across the Avon, which was destroyed in 1893/4.<sup>1</sup>

Two important finds of this period are known from the area. One is the Wraxall collar, a superb example of Celtic craftsmanship in bronze found in 1837 at Birdcombe near Wraxall, south of the Failand Ridge, near the site of a Roman villa. This collar has been dated to the mid first century A.D. The other is an anthropoid-hilted dagger or short sword<sup>2</sup>, of iron but originally with a head probably of bronze, dredged from the bed of the Bristol Avon at Sea Mills in or before 1913 and now in the British Museum; it has been dated between 150 and 100 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

The *Late Phase* (mainly Iron Age C), about 150 B.C. to A.D. 43, is represented in the Bristol region almost entirely by the coinage, which by its distribution reflects the tribal organization of the period. The tribe which inhabited the Cotswolds and their

1. H. M. Scarth. "The Camps on the River Avon at Clifton", in *Archaeologia*, 44 (1873), 428-34; C. Lloyd Morgan. "Notes on the Clifton, Burwalls and Stokeleigh Camps", in *Proc. Clifton Antiquarian Club*, 5 (1904), 8-24; J. W. Haldane. "Stokeleigh Camp", in *Proc. Univ. Bristol Speleol. Soc.* 11, 1 (1966), 31-8.
2. A dagger with hilt in the form of a stylized human figure.
3. R. R. Clarke and C. F. C. Hawkes. "An Iron Anthropoid Sword from Shouldham, Norfolk, with Related Continental and British Weapons", in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 21 (1955), 226, no 45, plate XXV, 8.

surroundings was the Dobunni, and their coinage is derived from the "British Remic" coins which occur mostly in Sussex and Wessex, and developed from a special type of pre-Roman Gaulish coin. A "British Remic" gold stater (c. 40-20 B.C.), found at Kingswood near Bristol in 1964, conforms to type in having a plain obverse, and a reverse bearing the design of a triple-tailed horse from which is derived that on the coins of the Dobunni.

The earliest Dobunnic coin is the uninscribed gold stater (c. 30-20 B.C.), an example of which is believed to have been found in the Bristol area about 1875 and passed from the collection of Sir John Evans to the British Museum. This bears on the obverse a branched ornament which occurs on that of all later gold coins of the Dobunni except those of BODVOC which have his name on the obverse. The reverse bears the usual design of the triple-tailed horse. Uninscribed silver coins of the Dobunni have been found at the Kings Weston Roman villa site and at Southmead (Westbury-on-Trym), both apparently in a Roman context, implying that the coinage continued to circulate during the first decade or so of the Roman occupation.

The uninscribed coinage was followed by a coinage bearing the names of the tribal rulers who used the title RIG which was doubtless derived from REX. Their chronological sequence is not yet clear. A gold stater of ANTED was found in 1955 on the southern slope of Kings Weston Hill, and one of EISU was bought in Bristol by Sir John Evans between 1864 and 1890, and is assumed to have been found locally. ANTED and EISU probably ruled sometime within the period between A.D. 20 and 43. In or shortly before A.D. 43, the tribe of the Dobunni was split into two, the north-eastern group (allying with Rome) being under BODVOC, and the south-western group (opposed to Rome) being under CORIO. The Bristol region was from now onwards in CORIO's territory until the Roman conquest was completed a few years later. The nearest recorded find-spots to Bristol of gold coins of CORIO are Cheddar, Gloucester (?), Yatton Keynell (near Castle Combe), and Norton Radstock; their absence so far from Bristol is evidently due only to the hazards of loss and discovery.<sup>1</sup>

Trading relations between the Dobunni and Cunobelin (and with his sons just before the conquest of A.D. 43) is perhaps reflected by the finding in 1708, during building operations at

1. D. F. Allen. "A Study of the Dobunnic Coinage", in E. M. Clifford. *Bagendon: A Belgic Oppidum* (1961), 75-149.

the old Manor House at Henbury (with Roman coins) of a gold inscribed stater of Cunobelin, and shortly before 1818 at Sea Mills of a bronze coin of Cunobelin, both minted at Camulodunum (Colchester). Both these finds would seem to have been associated with Roman remains.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, Bristol is the south-western limit of the distribution of coins of the Coritani of the East Midlands. A plated gold stater inscribed AVN-AST (probably within a decade or so of A.D. 43), bought in 1892 from F. Latchmore, is believed to have been a local find, and could be the Evans specimen now in the British Museum. If correctly provenanced, its presence could be explained by the proximity of the Jurassic Way which passed through the territories of the Coritani and the Dobunni.<sup>2</sup>

### Miscellaneous

The distribution of Iron Age sites and finds along and in the vicinity of Kings Weston Hill, and its "hog's back" form, make it evident that the ridgeway over that hill dates from that period if not earlier.

Extensive ancient field systems in Ashton Park and on Clifton and Durdham Downs, especially between the Zoological Gardens and the Reservoir, may date from the Iron Age but the period of their intensive use, if not their origin, is more likely to be Romano-British.

In the course of his excavations near St. Peter's Church, Philip A. Rahtz located a wide and deep ditch which he thought might be pre-Roman Iron Age, though more likely to be of late Saxon date; but no positive dating evidence was forthcoming.

### Concluding Summary

From the foregoing account and Maps, the changing settlement pattern in the region of the Lower Avon from Keynsham to Avonmouth is clear. In the Lower Palaeolithic it was essentially riverside; in the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic it was probably non-existent. In the Mesolithic it was both riverside and upland,

1. D. F. Allen. "The Origins of Coinage in Britain", in S. S. Frere (ed.) *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (1961), 97-306, esp. 230.
2. D. F. Allen. *The Coins of the Coritani* (Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles) (1963), nos. 92 and 375a, perhaps the same. For the Jurassic Way see W. F. Grimes. "The Jurassic Way across England", in W. F. Grimes (ed.) *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond* (1951), 144-71.

the Failand Ridge enjoying a popularity which continued through the Neolithic into the Early Bronze Age, probably because it provided good hunting. The use of the Bristol Channel and Avon in the Neolithic for distributing stone axes from Cornwall is well attested, and the same route was followed in the Copper Age by those transporting the blue-stones from the Prescelly Hills to Stonehenge, and through the Bronze Age by metalworkers partly from Ireland.

Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement on Clifton and Durdham Downs and their surroundings was slight but is evidenced by the probable megalithic tomb at Druid Stoke, the round barrow at Southmead, and occasional finds of flint arrowheads and other implements. The Iron Age settlement pattern was essentially upland and is represented mainly by the hill-forts and other earthworks in Kings Weston Hill, Blaise Castle Hill, and on the hills flanking the Avon Gorge, and by occasional chance finds, especially of pre-Roman coins.

The prehistory of the region has therefore been conditioned by two main factors: the attraction of the riverside and the surrounding hill country for early settlement, and the importance of the Bristol Avon as a means of communication.

The lines on which future research might well follow have been detailed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Here it is sufficient to urge the need for more information on the stratigraphy of the Lower Palaeolithic sites near Chapel Pill; on the distribution of Mesolithic sites in the area; on settlement sites of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages; and on the hill-forts of Clifton and Burwalls. It is hoped that all these problems will be taken in hand as soon as opportunity offers.

1. L. V. Grinsell (Editor). *A Survey and Policy concerning the Archaeology of the Bristol Region*, Part I, to 1066, Second Edition, 1966; "The Implementation of the B.A.R.G. Survey and Policy", in B.A.R.G. *Bulletin*, September 1969; *A Summary Policy Statement*, forthcoming. All published by Bristol Archaeological Research Group, The City Museum, Bristol.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A brief chronological survey of the literature of the prehistory of the Bristol area reflects to some extent the development of antiquarian and archaeological thought in Britain as a whole.

What Sir Thomas Kendrick had called "the British History in the Middle Ages" did not leave Bristol untouched. As Bath has its mythical founder Bladud, so Bristol, identified as the *Caer Odor* of the Welsh chroniclers, has its mythical founders Brennus and Belinus, whose statues are on the south front of St. John's Tower in Bell Lane. This myth was perpetuated by Robert Ricart in his *Kalendar* (1478), William of Worcester in his Bristol topography (c. 1480), John Leland in his *Itinerary* (c. 1540), and others.

The beginnings of field archaeology are illustrated by the still unpublished "Monumenta Britannica" of John Aubrey (1626-97) in the Bodleian Library. Aubrey had relatives at Burnett and often visited Bristol, and described Clifton Camp and other local antiquities. The *Itinerarium Curiosum* of William Stukeley (1687-1765) did not touch Bristol.

Apart from the first chapter of the *History and Antiquities of Bristol* (1789) by W. Barrett, which contributed little, the first substantial account of the prehistoric remains in and around Bristol is contained in Chapter 1 of the *Memoirs of Bristol*, volume 1 (1821), by Rev. Samuel Seyer, who devoted 92 pages to this subject. He included descriptions of what were then considered Druidical monuments, instancing not only Stanton Drew but also the megalithic stones at Stoke Bishop (Druid Stoke), evidently considering them as contemporary with the camps or hill-forts which he correctly attributed to the Celtic tribes, and on both the latter subjects he wrote at great length. Clifton Camp was in his opinion the forerunner of Bristol. Histories of Bristol published later in the nineteenth century added little to our knowledge of its prehistory.

The Bristol Meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (1898, 1930, and 1955) gave welcome stimuli to research. Their *Handbook to Bristol and the Neighbourhood* (1898) contains (pp. 38-50) a short chapter on prehistoric archaeology, by C. Lloyd Morgan and Arthur Bulleid. This was superseded by the chapter on "The Prehistoric Archaeology of the Bristol Region" by Dr. E. K. Tratman on pp. 147-62 of *Bristol and its Adjoining Counties* (1955), edited by C. M. MacInnes and W. F. Whittard for the 1955 Meeting. An earlier paper by Dr.

Tratman on "Prehistoric Bristol" (*Prov. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* 5 (1946), 162-82), dealt fully and exclusively with material from the city and county. An attempt to bring this up to date has been made by the present writer, as far as the collection in the City Museum, Bristol, is concerned, in the *Guide Catalogue to the South Western British Prehistoric Collections* (1968), published by the City Museum. In this work most of the local prehistoric finds are illustrated.

### NOTE ON MUSEUMS

The City Museum, Bristol, holds most of the material from the region. This includes the main collection of palaeoliths found by R. G. Hughes at Chapel Pill; local palaeoliths found by T. R. Fry; microliths from local sites; Neolithic and Bronze Age flint implements; a model of the Druid Stoke burial-chamber; nearly all the locally provenanced Bronze Age bronze implements; the stone axe-hammer from Keynsham; finds from the Iron Age earthworks on Blaise Castle Hill and Kings Weston Hill; and local Iron Age coins. The City Museum maintains a Card Index Catalogue of archaeological material from the Bristol area.

The Museum of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society holds many palaeoliths from Chapel Pill and Shirehampton; finds including iron bridle check-piece from the Iron Age (?) barrows on Kings Weston Hill; and material from the excavations at Stokeleigh hill-fort in 1967-69.

The Museum of the University of Bristol Department of Geology has a few palaeoliths found locally.

Material in other Museums includes:

Berlin, Muzeum der Vorgeschichte: palstave from Westbury-on-Trym.

Cambridge, University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology: the Spencer George Perceval collection includes a few local prehistoric items, notably the Bronze Age lignite bead from Bretry Hill. It is believed also to include material from Crabtree Slip, Shirehampton.

London. The British Museum holds (in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities) the anthropoid-hilted dagger from Sea Mills. The Department of Coins and Medals holds a gold uninscribed stater of the Dobunni and (probably) the plated gold stater of the Coritani, inscribed Aun-Ast, both believed to be from the Bristol area.

Taunton: Somerset County Museum Barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead from Pur Down.

Material destroyed by enemy action in the 1939/45 War includes :

*From the Museum of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society:*

the first collection of palaeoliths from the Chapel Pill and Shirehampton area formed by R. G. Hughes; collection of palaeoliths found by T. R. Fry at St. Anne's Park, Brislington; both these collections are described by J. A. Davies and T. R. Fry in *Proc. Univ. Bris. Spelaeol. Soc. 3*, part 3 (1929), 162-72.

*From the City Museum, Bristol:*

Many flint implements bearing registration numbers between F1 and F800, including those from Clifton Down and some from Shirehampton.

#### *Note on Doubtful or Destroyed Sites*

I have thought it best to omit the stones formerly in Armoury Square and that on Redland Green, because I think it is doubtful whether they ever formed parts of prehistoric monuments.



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